

# Cuts to Adult Education May Hurt NY Economy

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Epoch Times Staff Created: Apr 6, 2010 Last Updated: Apr 6, 2010

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Anthony Ng, deputy director of Policy and Advocacy at the New York Coalition for Adult Literacy, stands in front of city hall on Tuesday in opposition to cuts proposed by lawmakers that would remove \$2.6 million from the state's Adult Literacy Education program (Aloysio Santos/The Epoch Times)

NEW YORK—The Adult Literacy Education program will be taking a big hit due to drastic budget cuts proposed by lawmakers, according to a coalition of adult literacy advocates, teachers, students, and City Council members. Cuts were also proposed for GED (General Education Development) testing sites across New York.

The program would lose approximately \$2.6 million during the next fiscal year on top of a \$612,000 cut during the 2009-2010 Fiscal Year. GED testing sites would suffer a \$1.15 million cut.

"Education is a right," said Antony Ng, the deputy director of Policy and Advocacy at the New York Coalition for Adult Literacy. He added that the cuts would deprive people seeking to take the GED test throughout New York City and will negatively impact the local economy.

The programs, when they're fully funded, can help create a workforce, said Ng. People who are dependent on the program "need these jobs to help the economy recover."

Bruce Carmel, the deputy executive director for the Brooklyn-based adult education school Turning Point, said the rate for adult literacy went down in the past 10 years, under the Bush administration.

"All we want is the \$20 for each person," said Carmel.

Meanwhile, 1.6 million people in New York City don't have their GED. Approximately 33 percent of adults in the city are below the average literacy level. Funding has decreased due to low turnout in the 2000 census.

The coalition said that by the numbers, to lose the \$20 GED test for many residents, would adversely impact the economy. "These are terrible times to not invest in the workforce," Carmel added.

If they pass, the roughly 50,000 GED test takers would contribute \$325,000 in taxes over their lifetime that would amount to \$1.6 billion in revenues annually, according to a study.

Gov. David Paterson has stressed that New York needs to make deep and "painful" cuts to get spending and revenues back on track.

Under Paterson's budget, \$1.3 billion would be cut from education. The Senate's budget proposes to keep many of the education funds that Paterson's budget would cut. New York faces an over \$9.2 billion deficit for the 2010-2011 Fiscal Year and several solutions have been proposed. The Assembly, Senate, and the executive branch will come back from their holiday on Wednesday to restart talks on a budget package.

Kevin Smith, the head director of New York Coalition for Adult Literacy, said the Assembly, the Senate, and Paterson all propose the same cuts to Adult Literacy Education, which consists of over 50 programs throughout the state.

The City Council issued a statement saying the proposed cuts are "penny wise [and] pound foolish."

Omar Dunbar, 33, from Brooklyn, was the direct recipient of adult education classes. He said as a single parent of two daughters, it's an "absolute necessity" because the classes enable him to be a role model for his daughters.

Dunbar said, "How am I going to provide for my daughters if I can't make adequate wages because the only jobs I can get are at a lower payrate because you don't have the paper."

He added, "It's sad that they would think about cutting that because it's going to bring crime back because if you don't have money, you are going to be destined for crime."

"There's definitely other things they can do," he said.